

Considering Castration?

A guide for owners of male dogs

Castration is one of the most common procedures performed in dogs, yet there is often confusion about how it may affect behaviour. Whilst castration can provide health benefits and may reduce some testosterone-driven behaviours, it is not a guaranteed solution for training or behaviour problems. Understanding the potential benefits and limitations can help owners make an informed decision alongside their veterinary surgeon.



1 WHY DO OWNERS CONSIDER CASTRATION?

-  Preventing unwanted breeding
-  Reducing roaming behaviour
-  Reducing urine marking
-  Reducing mounting behaviour
-  Veterinary recommendations
-  Concerns about behaviour

2 WHAT BEHAVIOURS MAY IMPROVE?

Some behaviours influenced by testosterone may reduce after castration.

-  Seeking out females in season
-  Roaming in search of mating opportunities
-  Some urine marking behaviour
-  Some mounting behaviour
-  Some forms of competition between male dogs

However, individual responses vary considerably and improvements are never guaranteed.

3 WHAT BEHAVIOURS ARE UNLIKELY TO CHANGE?

Many common behaviour problems are not primarily driven by testosterone.

- Fearfulness and/or anxiety
- Aggression motivated by fear
- Noise sensitivities
- Separation-related behaviour
- Lead reactivity
- Frustration-related behaviours
- Learned behaviour patterns

Castration is unlikely to resolve behaviours not driven by testosterone.

4 COULD CASTRATION MAKE SOME BEHAVIOURS WORSE?



Research suggests that some male dogs may become **more** fearful, anxious or reactive following castration. This does not occur in every dog, but it highlights the

importance of considering the individual dog rather than assuming castration will automatically improve behaviour.

 *Dogs that are already nervous, lacking confidence or displaying fear-based behaviours may benefit from a behavioural assessment before a decision is made.*

5 SHOULD I CONSIDER A CHEMICAL CASTRATION TRIAL?

A temporary hormone implant can sometimes be used to mimic the effects of castration.

-  Reversible
-  Allows behavioural changes to be assessed before surgery
-  Can help owners make a more informed decision
-  Particularly useful when behavioural outcomes are uncertain



Discuss with your veterinary surgeon or a clinical behaviourist whether this may be appropriate for your dog.

THERE IS NO PERFECT AGE TO CASTRATE EVERY DOG



The best age for castration depends on many factors including breed, size, health, lifestyle and behaviour. Your veterinary surgeon or a clinical behaviourist can help you weigh up the potential benefits and risks for your individual dog.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE MAKING A DECISION



- ☐ Why am I considering castration?
- ☐ Is the behaviour I am concerned about likely to be hormone-driven?
- ☐ Does my dog show signs of fear, anxiety or low confidence?
- ☐ Have I discussed the health benefits and risks with my veterinary surgeon?
- ☐ Would a chemical castration trial be appropriate?
- ☐ Have I considered a behavioural assessment before making my decision?

KEY MESSAGE



Castration is not a training programme or cure for behaviour problems.

The best decision is one that considers your dog's health, behaviour, lifestyle and individual needs.



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



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